



Billy Woodberry

Film/Video

September 18, 2023
8 PM

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California Institute of the Arts

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Billy Woodberry

One of the main exponents of the LA Rebellion film movement and a former longtime faculty at the California Institute of the Arts, Billy Woodberry presents a series of his films rarely shown in Los Angeles. The program includes his early short, *The Pocketbook* (1978), adapted from a story by Langston Hughes; his ambitious documentary on the building of the Walt Disney Concert Hall, *The Architect, the Ants and the Bees* (2004); *Marseille après la guerre* (2016), an homage to Ousmane Sembène constructed through a montage of 1940s photographs found in the archives of the National Maritime Union; and *A Story from Africa* (2019), where, by analyzing and deconstructing thousands of shots taken by army photographer Velloso de Castro to keep a visual record of the 1907 Portuguese “pacification campaign” in the South of Angola, he evokes the tragic fate of the Cuamato nobleman, Calipalula.

The in-person program includes a post-screening talk with Billy Woodberry.

The Jack H. Skirball Series is organized by Jheanelle Brown and Bérénice Reynaud.

“[In *A Story from Africa*], what Woodberry does with those photos is a small wonder. His slow zooms, in and out, as well as the glides over the surface of the photos are a marvel to look at, especially when accompanied by António de Sousa Dias’ well-calibrated sound design and music that amplifies the sense of dread and tension.”

—Marko Stojiljković, *Ubiquarian*

The Architect, the Ants and the Bees (2004) 60 min.

The video documents the construction of the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles; it reveals not only the effect that the project had on the city but also concentrates on the gender and racial makeup of the workforce that built it.

Note: This film will be playing on the lobby monitors as guests enter and exit the theater. It will not play as part of the main screening.

The Pocketbook (1978) 13 min.

“In the course of a botched purse-snatching, a boy questions the course of his life in this adaptation of Langston Hughes’ short story, ‘Thank You, Ma’am.’”

—Ross Lipman

Marseille après la guerre (2016) 12 min.

“In this lyrical documentary, Billy Woodberry pays homage to Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembène. The film delves into a selection of black-and-white photographs belonging to a single collection. Sound and music add dynamism to the still pictures, which document a compelling portrait of life and labor at the docks of Marseille. Special attention is paid to the workers of African descent, and to the 1947 strike in which Sembène himself participated.”

—Cristina Álvarez López

A Story from Africa (2019) 32 min.

Following the 1885 Berlin Conference resolution on the partition of Africa, the Portuguese army uses a talented ensign to register the effective occupation of the territory conquered in 1907 to the Cuamato people, in the south of Angola. *A Story from Africa* enlivens this photographic archive through the tragic tale of Calipalula, the Cuamato nobleman essential to the unfolding of events in this Portuguese pacification campaign. In this experimental film Woodberry unleashes the violent movements for conquer captured in these photographs, also subverting what at first glance would obviously be understood as the “colonial gaze”.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Dallas, **Billy Woodberry** is one of the founders of the LA Rebellion film movement (also known as the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers). He received his MFA from UCLA in 1982 where he also taught at the School of Theater, Film and Television. In 1989, he became a permanent faculty member of the School of Film/Video and the School of Art at the California Institute of the Arts, until he moved to Portugal.

When a student at UCLA, he completed the short film, *The Pocketbook* (1978), inspired by a story by Langston Hughes, “Thank You, M’am.” The film features music by Leadbelly, Thelonious Monk, and Miles Davis.

Woodberry’s first feature film, *Bless Their Little Hearts* (1984), is a pioneering and essential work of the LA Rebellion movement, influenced by Italian neo-realism and the work of Third Cinema filmmakers. The film was awarded with an OCICand Ecumenical Jury awards at the Berlin International Film Festival and was added to the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress in 2013.

Woodberry appeared in Haile Gerima’s *Ashes and Embers* (1982) and in Charles Burnett’s *When It Rains* (1995). He provided narration for Thom Andersen’s and Noel Burch’s *Red Hollywood* (1996) and James Benning’s *Four Corners* (1998). In 2003-2004, he collaborated with artist/photographer/filmmaker Allan Sekula on *Facing the Music*, an exhibition and screening project about the construction of the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles (where REDCAT is housed). His video, *The Architect, the Ants and the Bees* is a component of this project.

In 2015, he completed *And When I Die, I Won’t Stay Dead*, a documentary about the Black Beat poet Bob Kaufman. The film had its world premiere at the Viennale, was presented at the opening night of MoMA’s Doc Fortnight in 2016, and was featured in a number of film festivals nationally and internationally. In 2017, Woodberry became a Guggenheim fellow.

Woodberry’s films have been screened at the Cannes and Berlin Film Festivals, Viennale, Rotterdam, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Harvard Film Archive, Camera Austria Symposium, Human Rights Watch Film Festival, Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, and BAMPFA in Berkeley, among other venues.

UPCOMING AT REDCAT

Another Gaze

Seis Vezes Mulher (Six Times Woman)

October 9

Another Gaze is a feminist film journal founded by Daniella Shreir that provides nuanced criticism about women and queer people. For *Seis Vezes Mulher (Six Times Woman)*, it has partnered with Cinelimite Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to exhibiting, distributing, and digitizing repertory Brazilian cinema. Together they have curated a series of six restored films directed by women under the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985). This film series includes work by artist, researcher, and video pioneer Leticia Parente, documentarian Helena Solberg, acclaimed filmmaker Eunice Gutman, and filmmakers Regina Chamlian, Maria Inês Villares, and Maria Inês Nunes de Castilho.

Crystal Z Campbell

Listen Now, We Speak Beyond This Moment

October 23

Crystal Z Campbell's films speak with collective power. Speaking before, and beyond, our present moment, these works unravel tangled and ignored histories, while also building future repositories for healing and knowledge. Campbell pulls from public records, long-lost archives, and future histories, reflecting upon our present-day failures. This evening of short films does not abide by a rubric of legibility. Rather, legibility is anathema to the social protection and fortified secrets of Campbell's artistic worlds — worlds constructed in service of Black bounty and reaping.



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